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MRS. HANNAH WOODD.

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MRS. HANNAH WOODD,

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L E T T E R

T O T H E

REV. RICHARD CONYERS, LL.D.
RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S, DEPTFORD.

L O N D O N :

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MEMOIRS, &c.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

THE following particulars, relative to my dearest and most amiable parent, I flatter myself will be far from being unacceptable. My reason for collecting them were, first, for my own private satisfaction, that the recollection that I had a friend now in glory, whom I so dearly loved, might excite me to be more earnest to press forwards to the same prize. But upon reflecting that they might be serviceable to others as well as myself; might express my great regard for many friends, who were desirous of copies; and prove an additional and well authenticated testimony to the power of religion, I felt an inclination to make them more public.

The style, I hope, will be excused the censures of criticism, and to every rational Christian, its

subject, I trust, will appear to be, the humble simplicity of genuine piety, triumphing in the day of dissolution, with a hope full of immortality.

My dear and honoured parent was born at Richmond in Surry, on the 19th of April, 1736. In 1759 she was married to Mr. Basil Woodd, who also was born at Richmond, in 1730, with whom she had been acquainted from her infancy.

Such an union, cemented by long endearment, and similarity of disposition, promised a scene of much temporal felicity; but other events a mysterious Providence intended. The January following, my dear father, being then from home on a visit, was seized with a violent fever, and died on the 12th of that month. So great a shock, to a mind of her sensibility, could leave no faint impression; but it pleased God to support her in this keen trial, and on the 5th of August following she was delivered of a son. Providence wonderfully interposed in our favour, and both root and branch, though then apparently withering, were preserved together, just as many years longer as she then had lived.

The afflicting circumstance of my father's death, nevertheless proved an eventual blessing, though conveyed in the disguise of woe. By

one stroke her mind was severed from worldly prospects, and being rent from the love of the creature, she now began more anxiously to seek the knowledge and love of the Creator.

With respect to my dear parent's sensible experience of divine comforts, they were not unfrequent, yet they were not extatic. She had a hope, which she would not give up, but still she rejoiced with trembling. Hence, until it pleased God to afflict her with bodily infirmities, her attainments in this respect, rarely exceeded an humble confidence.

In the year 1779, it pleased God to lay the foundation of the disorder, which at length occasioned her death. A severe fit of illness confined her to her room six or seven months. From that time she was much afflicted with a weakness and swelling in the joints; various means were used, but the remedy remained unknown.

This last year she was unable to rise from her seat without assistance, and was almost in a state of helplessness. The disorder got into her stomach. An entire loss of appetite took place, and a perpetual sickness.

God now visited her soul with more peculiar manifestations of his love. She believed her end

to be approaching, and seemed to be more filled with unspeakable joy as the day drew nigh, which for ever terminated all her sorrow.

As I did not apprehend my dear mother's exit would happen so soon, but flattered myself with the prolongation of the life I desired, I did not commit to paper, any particulars, till about three days before her dissolution, by which means I have been unable to recollect many of her pious sentiments. Since her decease, upon looking over a kind of diary, which her humility charged me never to open in her life-time, I have met with the following meditation on the last birthday she spent on earth, which will inform you of the state of her mind, better than any vague description my words can convey. I transcribe it without one alteration in her own easy familiar style. And if I do wrong in making a private meditation thus public, I as publicly ask her forgiveness, and when my plea is, that I hope it may revive some humble spirit, I am persuaded it will be granted.

April 19, 1784.

“ This is the day of my birth. Oh, my gracious Lord, make me sensible of thy mercies!—I would be all praise and thanksgiving.—I would
praise

praise thee for my birth, for there thy mercies began, and they have followed me all my days.—Dearest Lord, I cannot express my thanks; but thou seest my heart, and I trust seest me longing to be thankful!—Oh! that I could render praise and gratitude to thee, who, I humbly trust, hast new created my soul. This, this alone, makes the day of *natural* birth to be looked back to with comfort. Oh for a grateful heart!—Help me, gracious Lord, to praise thee for all that is past! My heart is full.—I want words.—Oh help me to look forward!—I have lived here a long time; help me to look beyond the grave; to look to thy right hand.—Increase my faith, help me to believe that thou hast indeed called me by thy grace; begun the good work, and that thou wilt carry it on and keep me, that where thou my blessed Jesus art, there thy poor unworthy servant shall be!—Oh, glory be to thy name, the work is thine own, and my trust is in thee! Oh keep me and save me, blessed Lord, I give myself to thee! Oh bring me to those blessed mansions of peace, where I shall be able to praise thee; where I shall be delivered from the painful clog of this body, which weighs down my soul!—Prepare me for thy coming!—O make me watchful and ready to

meet thee, when thou shalt please to send thy messenger, Death, for me—Oh make the pain I continually feel of use to me.—Sure I cannot be long here!—O quicken my soul!—Fix my affections on heavenly things.—Oh give me clearer views!—Oh give me a sense of pardoned sin.—Wash me in thy precious blood.—Cloath me with thy perfect righteousness.—Conform me more to thy divine image; and help me to meet death, as a kind friend, come to fetch me home to thee!—Amen, Amen, thou dearest Lord.”——

I will now return to her state of mind a few days before her departure. And I trust it will afford much satisfaction and comfort to you, to see one thus happy in the period of dissolution, who had sat long under your ministry; and by this convinces you she had attained real benefit, as well as a transient delight. At the same time I hope it will be admitted as an evidence of the truth of the principles she had espoused, and their ability to support in a dying hour. Religion shines in every situation and circumstance of life, but as an incontestible evidence of its own purity and power, it is most transcendant on the eve of dissolution. The Christian, then, “like the sun, looks largest when he sets.” Humanity naturally trembles at the idea of death: to close the eyes on every, the most beloved

loved objects ; to become a pale lifeless corps ; to be enclosed in the narrow limits of a coffin ; to become offensive to those who almost adored us ; and concealed from mortal view, to be consigned over to the prey of worms and corruption, are circumstances which we shudder at the thought of inevitably experiencing.

But, Sir, to see a soul with all these views before it, not merely armed with fortitude ; not merely made willing by resignation ; but smiling with calm delight at their appearance, and rejoicing with unspeakable joy at their sensible approach. Is not this a fact that speaks for itself ? Is not this an argument incontrovertibly self-evident ? An undeniable proof of the support which true religion can impart to its sincere votary ? Is it not an animating comment upon the promise made to the believer, "I will never leave thee, no ; nor ever forsake thee ?" As one whose feelings in a more striking manner described the above portrait, I hope without exaggerating, or over colouring the piece, I can present my dearest mother. The first proof I refer to is the letter which she dictated on Sunday, the 7th of November, and which was delivered to you the next day.—With your permission I will print it with the other particulars.

—Other evidences of the joyful state of her mind, may be collected from what she said to me and others on her death-bed. On my return from St. Peter's, Cornhill, that evening, she took hold of my hand and seemed much animated, "God, said she, my dear, has been very gracious this afternoon; he sent my son from me, but he sent himself to me.—O I am very happy! I am going to my mansion in the skies. I shall soon be there; and Oh! I shall be glad to receive you to it; you shall come in, but you shall never go out, no never." Pausing a little, she said, "If ever you have a family, tell the children they had a grandmother that feared God, and found the comforts of it on her death-bed." And tell your wife I shall be glad to see her in heaven, when you come to glory you must bring her with you. At another time, she addressed me, Let me tell you my own experience; when you come to lie upon your death-bed, an interest in Jesus will be found a precious possession.—O what a mercy of mercies! that we two poor creatures should be brought out of the bondage of Egypt, and united together in the kingdom of God's dear son! Oh my dear Son, I exhort you to preach the gospel; preach it boldly; fear not the face of man; endeavour to put in a word of comfort to the humble

ble believer, to poor weak souls.—I heartily wish you success; may you be useful to the souls of many.”—Being fatigued, she rested some little time; as soon as supper was over she renewed her triumphant language; and after she had dictated the letter to you, she was elated into transports in speaking of the boundless love of Christ and his salvation. “It is,” she cried out, “a glorious salvation! a free unmerited salvation! a full complete salvation! a perfect eternal salvation! It is a deliverance from every enemy.—It is a supply of every want—It is all I can wish for in time. It is all I can wish for in death. It is all I shall want in eternity.”—she went on in this strain for a long while, with an amazing quick succession of ideas.—Then upon seeing me, she changed the subject, and in the same elevated style, went on about ten minutes, blessing and praising God for the great comfort we had experienced in each other, the union which subsisted between us, and the blessed hope that though we parted for a season, we should one day meet again for ever. In this last instance, her feelings were worked up to more than she could well sustain; and I was fearful she would exhaust all her strength, as she spoke with such rapidity that it was impossible to take down, or recollect, one half which she said. In the afternoon she had taken a
most

most affectionate leave of some of her friends, to whom she expressed a full assurance of her eternal felicity; and wished them much happiness till she met them in a better place. Sunday night she had little rest.—Monday morning she desired me to read to her the verses you received on the death of Mrs. Conyers. After hearing them with great pleasure, she exclaimed “I shall see that dear friend of mine again and her dear partner, we shall unite in praise for ever; we shall make a charming three-fold knot. Adverting to the adorable Redeemer, she repeated with great feeling,

“ I long to see those hands which made me blest.

“ Those feet which travell’d to procure my rest.”

After a short pause she proceeded,

“ I long to behold him array’d

“ With glory and light from above;

“ The King in his beauty display’d,

“ His beauty of holiest love.

“ I languish, I pine to be there,

“ Where Jesus has fixed his abode;

“ Oh when shall we meet in the air,

“ And fly to the mount of my God.”

A short

A short time after she asked a friend, whether she had a good hope for her ; and whether in the opinion of her friends, her life had been consistent with her profession ? Her friend replied in the affirmative, and added, "Why should you make yourself anxious about what others think of you ; have you not a good hope for yourself ?" Yes," said she, "thank God, I have a hope built upon the rock of ages." She desired that all who came to the house might see her ; this request however, a desire to preserve her life a little longer, forbid our complying with. Accidentally hearing the name of one who called, she intreated earnestly she might see him ; upon his coming into the room, she took hold of his hand and said, "Ah ! my friend, I am dying ; but I am going to glory ; I shall soon see my dear heavenly Father ; God bless you, and be with you till I meet you there ; I shall be glad to see you, farewell." After his departure she said, "I hope it will please God not to permit me to dishonour his cause ; I trust my death will shew how God can support a poor weak believer.—If it be his blessed will, I hope I shall die in triumph ; and leave behind me a testimony of his grace ; I long to tell others what joy I feel ; what God has done for me, and what God will do for all that trust in him."

A friend

A friend of hers happening to call, who had lost a pious son in the prime of life, she addressed her with great affection.—“Ah, Mrs.——, I shall soon be in glory ; I shall soon see your dear child Samuel, I loved him dearly ; we shall soon meet again ; and in God’s time you shall join us.

At about half past three this afternoon she was seized with a strong convulsion fit, which greatly alarmed us. When she came to herself, she did not seem the least sensible of what had happened. and proceeded in the same animated manner as before.

Soon after her recovery from the fit, a friend came in, and having felt her pulse, remarked there was nothing to be immediately alarmed at ; she replied with great eagerness, as if she felt injured at the expression. “I am not alarmed ; no, I am not afraid ; I am going to heaven ;” and perceiving me near her, she said, “ now, my dear, do you vouch for me ; am I alarmed ? no, I know I shall be happy.”

After a little time she recollected a circumstance of a person, who, in great agony of mind upon his death-bed, said to one that was present with much horror, “ Woman, how shall I go through this great scene ?” She repeated the sentence, paused on it for a few minutes, but then exclaimed

ed with great triumph, "It is no great scene to me ; no, it is a blessed scene ; it is a glorious scene to me ; I am going to my God ; I shall see the King in his beauty ; I shall be for ever near him ; I shall for ever sing his praises."

Her heart was again much elated, and was almost overpowered with sensations of gratitude, in reflecting upon God's goodness towards her ; "God," she said, "has greatly indulged my desires ; has answered my prayers in a wonderful manner. How has he dealt with me in sparing me so long, to see you, my son, so much settled in life.—I remember, says she," when I used to express my anxiety for your eternal welfare to a friend of mine, he always said in allusion to the story of Monica, the mother of St. Austin, go home and make yourself easy ; the child of those tears can never perish.—Now, my dear, when God has removed me, imitate St. Austins behaviour after the death of Monica ; do not be dejected ; think of the happiness I shall then be enjoying, and say as he said when some wondered at his cheerfulness, my mother is not a woman to be lamented."

She then desired me to read the 54th chapter of Isaiah ; when I came to the 5th verse, she cried out with rapture, "My Maker is my husband, the
Lord

Lord of Hosts is his name;" and again, " God hath called me as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit." After this, she lay seemingly much fatigued the rest of the evening; her mind seemed wholly conversant in heavenly things, but she was too much exhausted for more conversation.

At a quarter before twelve the fit again came on; and she was in strong convulsions, with some short intermissions, until half past four, during which space she had in all five fits. In the intervals, her mind seemed to retain its elevated state. She spoke with great pleasure of her speedy departure; and dwelt with rapture upon her glorious inheritance. " O how happy shall I be," said she, " to see you all there."

She desired a friend who sat up with her, to sing the following hymn.

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Thro' ev'ry land, by ev'ry tongue.

Eternal are thy mercies, Lord,
Eternal truth attends thy word;
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,
Till sun shall rise and set no more.

She

She attempted to join herself, but her voice faltered. When this was finished, and she again expressed the great joy she felt in the prospect of death, "Come," says she, "sing me another, sing me this :

Hosanna to Jesus on high,
 Another has entered his rest ;
 Another escap'd to the sky,
 And lodg'd in Emanuel's breast,

Her friends were too much affected for such a strain as this, therefore it was not attempted. The last fit she had on this morning greatly impaired her strength, and left her in a kind of stupor. Her face grew very pale, her eyes lost their vivacity, and I was apprehensive her change was approaching very fast. She lay in this state the whole of the day, and seemed not to recollect any about her, excepting now and then.—By what little I could make out, she seemed very composed and happy, though her strength was greatly debilitated. She said at one time, "I shall see him as he is ; I shall be for ever near him and behold his face ; my eyes shall behold him ; I shall see him for myself and not another."—But this she spoke with great weakness and languour, and seemed on the verge
of

of experiencing the blessings she was speaking of.

At evening she had another fit, in which she lay about twenty minutes, and continued all the night partly in a doze, and partly insensible.

Wednesday she continued in the same state, and had three very strong fits. Upon listening very attentively to her, I heard her whispering to herself, "blessed be God, blessed be God;" and seemed perfectly calm and happy; but these intervals of sense were diminished by each fit. About nine in the evening I spoke to her to see if she knew me; she seemed sensible for a few minutes, called me by my name, and expressed how tenderly she loved me. During the night she was almost incessantly convulsed, but no regular fit came on till about half past two; before breakfast time, she had five fits. In the interval of the fifth, I addressed her, "My dearest mother, do you know me?" she replied, "My dear son Basil, I am afraid you will make yourself ill." This was the last time she spoke. From this hour she drew her breath with great difficulty, and between this and eleven at night, she had no less than thirty fits.

The hour was now approaching in which I was to part with the valuable woman, whom I had been so long endeared to; whom I highly respect-
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ed as my parent ; sincerely loved as my friend ; and admired as a real Christian. My mind was considerably affected ; but the agonies of pain which I had been eye-witness to, reconciled me, in some degree to a separation ; and the assured confidence of her eternal salvation would not permit me but to rejoice in the approaching felicity of one, to whom I had been so nearly allied.

Hence affection forbade me to lament, and though indeed, my dear Sir, severely keen were my sensations, and the present event had been all my life dreaded, still I found my mother's felicity could not but afford felicity to her son.

The moment approached, at eleven minutes past twelve, my beloved parent expired. She just survived till Friday-morning, the 12th of November. I desire to bless God, I felt amazingly supported.

After giving way to my distress for a few moments, the assurance of her happier state was impressed on my mind in so powerful a manner, that I could not but rejoice in her superior felicity. Oh ! shall I murmur, shall I repine at such an event ? That be far from me ; forbid it resignation ; forbid it filial affection. No, let me not sorrow as one without hope. I late had a parent languishing under continual pain ; I have now a
parent

parent whom no disquietude approaches. I late had a parent in a world of distress and danger ; I have now a parent in a world of glorified spirits. I saw her lately on earth, fainting and expiring ; I see her now in glory, alive for evermore. I have now another attachment to the skies. Oh ! never, never, let me think of her, but as in the immediate presence of her God ; contemplating the glories of his person ; and uniting with the countless number of the redeemed in the eternal anthem of triumph, gratitude and praise !

On Friday, the 19th instant, her dear remains were interred at Richmond. There rest, ye yet much valued relics, until a brighter morning cloaths you with additional beauty ; then waking up from your temporary slumber, ye shall be transformed into an excellence like unto his glorified body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Thus, Sir, I have attempted to give you some particulars respecting my dear parent. I flatter myself that they will afford you some degree of pleasure and satisfaction ; and that your candor, and friendship for the writer, will incline you to pardon the defects of the epistle.

It may, perhaps, when in print, fall into the hands of persons, who may censure it, as tinctured with

with what they call enthusiasm. But be the opinion of the world, on it, what it will, I trust there is nothing in it inconsistent with what St. Paul calls, "a reasonable account of our hope." I desire by this means to express my publick testimony to those truths, which were my dear parent's support in the hour of death; and I close the account with this unfeigned request, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like hers. Thus prepare me, Oh, my God, for my last day's trial, and then fly swift, ye moments, that ye may hasten its approach.

I remain,

My dear Sir,

With the greatest respect and affection,

Yours sincerely,

Greenwich Road,

Nov. 25, 1784.

BASIL WOODD.

*The following is a Copy of the Letter to the Rev.
Dr. CONYERS, alluded to, page 11.*

MY VERY DEAR SIR,

I LOVED you dearly in the Christianbonds. I longed to let my dear Dr. Conyers know, that I am *dying*, and *not afraid*. I trust I am going to my dear Father's house. And when I thought I was *dying*, I was never so *happy* in all the days of my life.—I would write to tell you what my soul feels in *this* blessed prospect, that I might bear my testimony to his grace; that I might refresh your soul, who have so often refreshed mine, and tell you what joy I feel in this prospect. I do not doubt of meeting you in heaven, and my dear child too.

Your true Christian friend,

Greenwich Road,
Nov. 7. 1784.

HANNAH WOODD.

